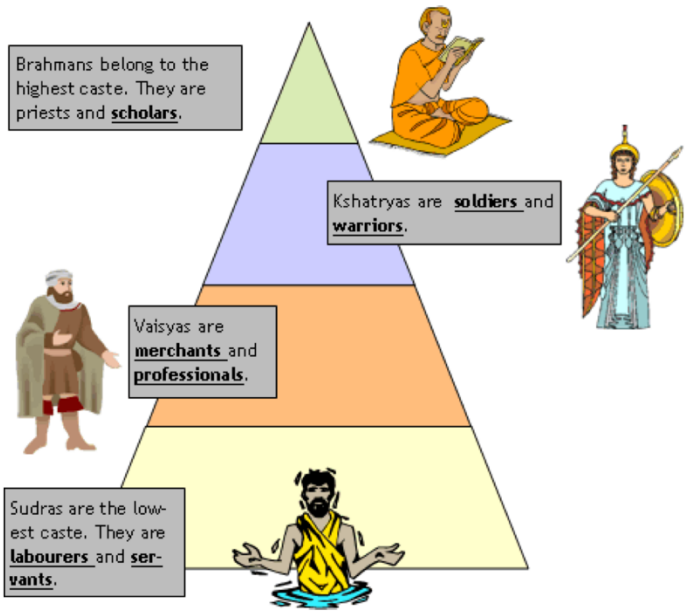
The Indian caste system – visualizing text in a mediation

A large part of Indian society still lives in a system dominated by castes. A caste is a social class which everybody is born into. There are a few thousand castes and each of them has their own traditions and customs[1]. Once a person is born into a caste she cannot get out, or marry someone from a different caste. Castes are based on Hindu beliefs. The caste system defines which jobs people can have and with which other people they can have contact.



The caste system is based on[2] four major classes. At the top are the Brahmins or priests. Below them are kings, soldiers and other people who work in the government. People in this caste are called Ksatryas. Then comes the caste of the Vaisyas: the bankers, businessmen and traders[3]. At the bottom of the caste system are normal workers and farmers. People in this caste are known under the name of the Sudras.
Each caste has certain rights and privileges. Everyone, for example, can get food from a Brahmin, but a priest himself is thought to be polluted[4] if he receives food from a person of a lower caste.
A large group of people – so-called untouchables[5] – live outside the caste system. They are often homeless people. They do work that nobody else does and are often excluded in Hindu ceremonies. They are not allowed to drink water from a public fountain for fear of polluting the water for others.
Although the caste system is no longer officially allowed, it still exists, especially in the rural areas[6] of India.

*1: **costum** – Brauch, 2: **to be based on** – gegründet sein auf, 3: **trader** – der Händler, 4: **to pollute** – verunreinigen, 5: **untouchable** – unberührbar, 6: **rural areas** – ländliche Gegend*

Tasks

Answer all the following questions in German.

1. Read the text. Write down in your own words what you learn about the castes.
2. Find a place in the diagram for the untouchables. What information do you have about them? Write that down in German, too.
3. Write down the definition of the word “caste”.
4. What are the characteristics of a caste?
5. What’s the importance of castes today?

Food in India

Poverty in India

Poverty is a huge issue in India. The percentages of those living under the international poverty line of 1,90 USD/day vary depending on the source used. Millions of children and families live in the slums or on the streets. Children work on the streets begging and selling to make money for food each day. There is a lack of food, clean water, sanitation, health care and education for these children and families.

What is the poverty rate in India in 2019?
India may become the third-largest economy by 2030 and poverty will fall below 10 per cent by 2025.
According to the 2011 Census, nearly 22 per cent of India's population is poor, and this rate was already 17 per cent in 2019.

What are the main reasons for poverty in India?
The high population growth rate is one major reason for poverty in India. But also

- inadequate access to clean water and nutritious food
- little or no access to livelihoods or jobs
- conflicts and violence
- inequality
- poor education
- climate change
- lack of infrastructure
- limited capacity of the government

What has India done to reduce poverty?
Most important is improving living standards through better availability of material goods such as cooking fuel, sanitation facilities, and household assets. More significantly, improved nutrition also contributes to the reduction in poverty.

The Top 10 Solutions to cut poverty and grow the middle class

- create jobs.
- raise the minimum wage
- increase the Earned Income Tax Credit for childless workers
- support pay equity
- provide paid leave and paid sick days
- establish work schedules that work
- invest in affordable, high-quality childcare and early education
- expand Medicaid

Love and Marriage in India

What do Indians think about love and marriage? In India, about 90 per cent of marriages are arranged; unlike in Western countries, the divorce rate is only 1 per cent. Does this mean that arranged marriages work better? Statistical data answers some of the most important questions about India. How people there earn and spend their money, what jobs they do, how they vote and what kills them. But numbers can also illustrate other aspects of people's lives and paint a picture of how they live or what they think about love.

Watching Indian films, one gets the impression that there is no subject young Indians are more preoccupied with than romantic, everlasting love. While this may be true in some cases, the vast majority of Indians still marry a partner chosen by the family. In a survey (2018), 93% of married Indians said their marriage was arranged. Only 3% had a love marriage, and another 2% described their marriage as 'love and arranged marriage', meaning that families indeed initiated the relationship. Still, the couple then actually fell in love with each other and agreed
to marry.

Marriage within one's caste is still an essential feature of marriage in India. In surveys, younger people often express their willingness to marry outside their caste. But there is a big gap between the idealised and the realised preferences.

Sarika Singh has always dreamed of a love marriage. She already had to fight to attend a college that was relatively far from home. And she thought that a love marriage would probably be the next thing she would have to fight for. She was allowed to attend college but not to have any contact with male students so as not to ruin her reputation. Even her elder brother drove by her college a few times daily to monitor her student life. Since the college was important to Sarika, she followed the 'rules' and graduated. She was looking forward to finding a job and then maybe even meeting the love of her life. But in her final year of studies, her marriage to the son of one of her father's friends from the same community was decided. Sarika submitted to her parents' will and hoped for a husband who would at least show her sympathy and appreciation.

Twice a month, Aarav takes the night bus from Mumbai, where he works, to the village where his family lives. He packs a bag for the journey and has to leave many parts of himself behind in his tiny one-room flat. He cannot take these parts of his new life with him. No one is supposed to know that he eats meat and drinks beer occasionally. But his biggest secret is his girlfriend who belongs to a different caste. This is something that both his and her parents would never accept. Aarav lives two lives and knows that there are very few inter-caste marriages and has resigned himself to the fact that there will be no official life together with his girlfriend.

A beginner's guide to Bollywood

1 The name 'Bollywood' is a mixture of Bombay (Mumbai's old name) and Hollywood. About a thousand films are made in Mumbai every year, more than in Hollywood itself!

2 Often the songs and dances are as important as the characters and the story. Many film companies release some of the songs before the film comes into the cinemas. This helps to generate interest in the film. In older films the dances are similar to classical dances that are hundreds of years old. More recent films have dances that are more like the western disco style. It is not unusual for a star to play a guest role and only appear for one song and dance in the film.

3 The language of Bollywood movies is usually Hindi, but recent films have had some English dialogue, too. Hindi is usually used for love scenes and scenes at home, while business deals are often done in English.

4 Indian film fans like value for money, so most Bollywood films are very long (two and half hours or more!).
The storyline of a Bollywood film often starts with a happy, colourful situation. Then a tragedy strikes! This can be a love triangle, murder, corruption or caste problems. But you will only find a few Bollywood films without a happy ending! There are lots of 'masala' films, named after a mixture of spices. These are a mixture, with action, love and comedy, and very sad scenes. Dilwale, a successful Bollywood film from 2015, is a good example of a 'masala' film.

5 Every few years there are new stars who make several films a year and are often in the gossip pages of the Mumbai press. One of the biggest stars of the last few years is Shahrukh Khan, who starred with Priyanka Chopra in 'Don – The Chase Begins Again' in 2006, and Aamir Khan, whose film Lagaan (Lar tax) was nominated for an Oscar in 2001.

6 Many Bollywood films take place in other countries. The US is usually shown as a country of business, and a place where there are great opportunities to make money. London, with its famous sights, is also a popular location in Bollywood films. Characters often leave India to make a new life, but many also become homesick and want to go back.

7 The success of Bollywood films had a big influence on American cinema as well. The musicals *Moulin rouge* and *Mamma Mia* both show the influence of Bollywood films in the way they use songs and dances in their storyline. On the other side, producers of Bollywood films try to cut down the number of songs to make those films more appealing for an international audience.

Task 2: *Scan the text again and take notes. Use bullet points!*

Find information about:

1) *The US in Bollywood films*
2) *Shahrukh Khan*
3) *Dance styles*
4) *'Masala' films*
5) *Bollywood and the Oscars*
6) *western films influenced by Bollywood*
7) *why Bollywood films are so long*
8) *structure of a Bollywood film*

Endangered species in India

Waste management in India

India is just about overflowing with garbage. They are the 12th largest plastic polluters in the world and 10th in the amount of waste it produces daily. Its landfills are overflowing, and there are problems with garbage collection, transport, treatment and disposal. Many children and adults search the garbage heaps daily to find things to sell. They are called "rag pickers".
With millions of tons of waste still ending up in landfills each year and often leaking into the environment, improving management systems in the country is of key importance to guarantee a safe handling and disposal of waste.

How does India manage waste?
The informal recycling industry plays a role in waste management. It also ensures that less waste reaches landfills. But many waste-to-energy plants in India are not operating to their full potential. The installation of waste-to-compost and bio-methanation plants would reduce the load of landfill sites.

What are the problems faced during solid waste disposal in India?
The major problems affecting solid waste management are unscientific treatment, improper collection of waste, and ethical issues. This, in turn, leads to hazards like environmental degradation, water pollution, soil pollution, and air pollution.

How can we control waste management?
Below are nine simple changes you can make to reduce waste in your home.

- get to know the rules of recycling.
- ditch the plastic bags.
- make a meal plan.
- start relying on reusable containers.
- start composting.
- learn to repair rather than discard.
- stop using disposable plates.

What are the benefits of waste management?
Proper safety measures and waste disposal methods make for a cleaner, safer world with fewer diseases and lower potential harm to both humans and animals. When done right, waste management can also conserve energy and reduce dangerous deforestation, including cutting down fewer trees for paper production.

What are the 4Rs?

- reduction
- reuse
- recycling
- recovery

Air pollution in India

Among the many issues affecting India, air pollution is one of the most important, and New Delhi has been named the most polluted city in the world.

Of the world's 30 cities with the worst air pollution, 21 are in India. The capital, New Delhi, has the poorest air quality among capital cities globally. Concentrations of particulate matter in New Delhi are nearly 10 times higher than the World Health Organization guidelines.

What causes Delhi's air pollution?

There is no single reason you can attribute to this situation. A combination of various factors as the lack of accountability among officials and ignorance among the citizens, has caused the problem to assume epic proportions today.

- firecrackers over Diwali
- crop burning in neighboring states of Haryana and Punjab
- burning garbage at night for warmth by Delhi's urban poor
- toxic fumes from diesel engines

The main reasons for the thick smog and absolutely dismal visibility are the drop in wind speed and low temperatures, preventing the dispersal of pollutants.

The effects are devastating. Air pollution is a silent killer, causing more than 2 million deaths a year in India. It also leads to health problems like respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

What time works best, and what doesn't?

6 - 8 a.m. is by far the worst time of the day. This is also the time that all the kids are going to school, standing at the bus stop, sitting in diesel buses and then lining up to get into their classes - all of those activities mostly outdoors.

Noon - 5:00 pm is the best time of the day and the best time for the kids to be out playing.

The air at night from 9 p.m. to 9 a.m. is about twice as bad as during the day from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. So, the kids are much more in danger at night in their beds than in school during the day.

So, what can a parent do about it?

There is no doubt that parents need to be very cautious about the environment and plan their children's outdoor activities as much as possible. But besides hoping that the authorities and the government are working on the problem, here is what one can do to minimize the health risks of the pollution crisis.

- Early morning and late evenings are a sure NO to go outside, so make sure no activities are planned then. Most schools have shifted or suspended their morning outdoor activity due to the pollution crisis.

- Children should be sent outside when the pollution levels are low so that kids are not kept inside the house all day.
- A good quality air purifier can also be a great help.
- When children (especially the little ones) need to go out some time, they should use a good quality air mask.
- To help kids escape the dryness in the air, a bucket or bowl of water in the corner of the room helps a lot.
- Kids should drink a lot during the deadly combination of winter and pollution.